

BREAK THE MOLD, by Dr. Jill Crista N.D., Book Report and Comment
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Part I

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What's up with mold? Isn't all this hoopla just about allergy to mold? Wrong! This is a disabling and sometimes deadly invasion of the body with mold organisms and their poisons. Isn't this about just a few people who are genetically susceptible to it? Not everybody who gets exposed to mold will get this illness, but the ones who do send a warning to the rest of us. True, we may not know we are being exposed or feel any symptoms, but what is that mold doing in our bodies anyway, in the long term? How about the synergistic harm of these toxins (mycotoxins), along with the hundreds of other environmental chemicals to which we are constantly exposed? What about cancer, considered mainly an environmental disease? When you recognize that molds are not something that are a normal part of our microbiome, that should cause alarm bells to ring. Multitudes of bacteria, yeast, and viruses are living on and in our bodies in symbiosis with us. This does not include molds. These other microbes need us alive for them to survive. Molds can live on our cadavers, and they don't care whether we live or die. It just does not seem right for them to be living in our bodies. When you see what havoc it raises with many people who are susceptible, you may want to avoid being a victim yourself, and you may want your friends and family to stay clear of it.

This book goes into detail about how molds cause illness, how to avoid them, and what's involved in the long, laborious, tedious process of treating mold illness, even after exposure is eliminated. When you consider that half of the houses in this country have had water damage, and many more grow mold due to humidity, it appears that we have a much larger problem than we may appreciate. Just like chemical environmental toxicants, we need to educate the public about this hazard. It may be closer to us than we think. Also, if you have friends or family members with mold illness, you will understand better that their problems are real, in spite of all the other people in the same environment having no symptoms, and their doubting the reality of the sick person's mold illness.

Dr. Crista graduated with honors from the National University of Naturopathic Medicine in 2003, is a nationally recognized speaker on neuro-inflammatory conditions such as brain injury, mold illness, and autoimmune encephalitis, and was practicing director of two integrative medicine clinics for over a decade. She herself recovered from mold illness.

Dr. Ben Lynch, author of Instant National Bestseller, Dirty Genes, gives high praise to this book. "It's not a matter of IF – it's a matter of WHEN you will get sick from mold. It's everywhere and you need to learn how to spot it, treat it, and eliminate it. Break the Mold is the guide to get, so mold doesn't get you. Seriously. Get this book."

Dr. Paul Anderson writes, "In three decades of helping very ill patients I have come up against mold and mold related illness repeatedly and struggled to find good (and

complete) patient resources. Break the Mold is just such a resource and I plan to recommend it and use it in our clinics.”

The first presentation in the book is a 100+ questionnaire to determine the likelihood that the symptoms are from mold illness. Other things to consider with multiple symptoms are tick-borne infections, environmental toxins, food sensitivities, immunodeficiency syndromes, chronic viral infections, and intestinal parasites.

Dr. Crista has helped many patients who had chronic fatigue and other symptoms and were just not getting well until mold illness was detected. The lack of awareness of this problem is astounding, as very little human research has been done. Most of the research has been on animal and animal feed. People who feed livestock know the risks very well and have developed mold mitigation techniques to keep their animals healthy.

If you put a frog into hot water, it jumps right out. If you raise the temperature gradually, the frog doesn't recognize the change until it's already cooked. Sorry to use such a gross example, but that is often the way it is with people's recognizing that they have mold illness. That is what happened to the author. She didn't even recognize her problem for a long time, even though she had been treating patients for mold illness!

There is no one symptom that characterizes mold illness. It affects all systems of the body. The more total symptoms a person has, the more likely it is mold. One area that is commonly affected is the respiratory system, as the mold is inhaled and goes to nose, throat, and chest, and then the mucus is swallowed, and it invades the digestive system and more. It can make pre-existing conditions worse, and it can masquerade as many other conditions. Chronic Lyme disease and mold illness can occur together and each one makes the other more difficult to treat, and you may not know which one came first. The author lists many symptoms from each system in the body. The symptom questionnaire at the beginning of the book is the best way to estimate the likelihood of mold illness. Symptoms may stealthily, gradually develop, over 3 months after exposure begins, and the person may not suspect mold, like the frog in hot water. The mold spores can grow and colonize in our bodies, people can be allergic to the spores, and then the worst effect is from the toxins released by the molds.

Mold is a necessary part of nature, decomposing and recycling plant debris for nutrients for new plant growth; and in nature, everything is in balance. When mold gets into our houses and in our bodies where it doesn't belong, it breaks free of natural limitations and becomes aggressive. It is the ultimate survivor, one of the oldest living species on earth.

Dr. Crista explores the many ways mold carries out its "hidden agenda" of recycling and decomposing your body, (and your house, where the problem may have begun). Mold knows how to lurk inside a building undetected, under flooring, behind walls, without any smell. If you smell it, then you know you have a problem. Likely you would be able to see it also, because the odor comes from its being exposed to air and its release of aldehydes, alcohol, etc., but just because you don't see it or smell it, that

doesn't mean it's safe, or that it's not there. It only needs humidity to grow on any carbohydrate rich material, such as plywood, particleboard, carpet, but the more broken down the material, the easier to grow on it. Mold can grow even on cement, if it is dusty. If there is dust on top of picture frames or door jams, and there is sufficient humidity, mold can grow.

Molds put out powerful toxins to kill bacteria and other competitors, poisonous enough that they are used in making chemical weapons, stored in many parts of the world. These mycotoxins have no odor, the fact of which makes them all the more dangerous. Mycotoxins can invisibly creep through flooring, drywall, and other building materials. Then we can breathe them into our lungs more deeply than the mold spores, then from the lungs they can go all over the body and affect many organs, and they can cross the placenta to the fetus. Mycotoxins harm all living beings - human, animal, and plant. Some people are genetically more susceptible to the toxins than others. They are like the proverbial "canaries in the coalmines." That doesn't mean the rest of us are safe. It all depends on the dose and the duration. Remember the chemical weapons.

Now, we all have a few molds and fungi growing in our sinuses as part of the microbiome, including bacteria, viruses, etc., but all it takes is for the molds from a water damaged building to colonize the respiratory tract and digestive system, and the usual mold colonies turn "criminal," all the different types of molds spitting out toxins to compete with the others. When a mold feels threatened, then it really shoots out the toxins and more spores. Then on top of that, each mycotoxin is made more toxic in the presence of other toxins. If the concentration of toxins is strong enough, they can accumulate in the building materials, and outgas later, even after the moldy materials are removed and you think you are all free and clear of the problem. The spores can take root and colonize the respiratory tract, but spore fragments can get deeper in the lungs, sit there for a long time, and trigger allergic reactions.

Mold can weaken the immune system, so that a person can begin having more frequent colds, or may not get visibly sick, but just chronically unwell, with low-grade infections. There can be an increased risk for cancer caused by (1) chronic viral infections, (2) the weakened immune system's difficulty with removing other cancer - promoting "garbage," from the body, and (3) the carcinogenic effect of the mycotoxins themselves.

The molds crave sugars and other carbohydrates, so they make the person crave the same. They also form a biofilm in the intestines that also harbor yeast (*Candida*), which also craves sugar. If the mold is not fed, it secretes chemicals that cause general discomfort and brain fog, to force the person to eat carbs. Also general symptoms can be very vague, explained by something else, when it is mycotoxins causing them. Allergies to many things can develop, even if the person has never had allergies before. Mold deranges the immune system, causing it to be weak in fighting off viruses, and over-reactive at the same time, causing allergies. Food sensitivities and diarrhea and constipation can develop. Overloading the detoxification system with mycotoxins leaves it weak and unable to handle other toxins, so the person develops sensitivity to airborne

chemicals, perfumes, etc. (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity). People with mold illness often feel malaise, may not feel like doing much, and may become sensitive to electromagnetic fields and electrical currents.

Mold illness is difficult to diagnose because of the varied, vague symptoms, and general lack of available testing. Doctors usually think of mold as just an allergy, but what they are thinking of is spore illness. These spores do result in upper respiratory allergy symptoms. But mold illness is much more than spore allergy, with the colonization by mold in the body and with the release of mycotoxins.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) estimates that 1 out of 4 buildings in the country have enough water damage to grow toxic mold that negatively affect human health. Mold can grow on a moist surface in 24 to 48 hrs. It can lurk behind drywall. Unfortunately, landlords, insurance companies, real estate agents, and conference organizers have much to lose financially if mold is discovered and they have to take responsibility, so they do many things to get out of repairing the buildings, including hiding the damage, covering it over, avoiding testing for it, trivializing it, trying to reassure people that “it’s not the dangerous kind of mold.” The author states, “INDOOR MOLD IS NEVER OK- EVER, EVER, EVER.”

The author goes into detail about the multiplicity of symptoms that can occur, and she recounts several case studies, stories of people who encountered and overcame mold illness.

She recommends several tests of various systems of the body to evaluate the sickness. The first thing to do is to take the Crista Mold Questionnaire, and if the score is high, the urine mycotoxin test detects exposure to mold, and/or mold growing in your body. A comprehensive stool test can find mold or yeast growing in the gut. A VCS or Visual Contrast Sensitivity test is available online. An abnormal result can mean toxins from mold or from other chemicals. The Organic Acids Test can suspect mold if #'s 2, 4, and 5 are positive. The following are some of the blood tests she recommends: Complete Blood Count, tests for immune function such as T and B cells and Natural Killer Cells, Vitamin D level, liver enzymes, creatinine for kidney function, and genetic susceptibility tests.

If you conclude you have mold illness, she recommends the five tools for healing: Avoidance, Fundamentals, Protect, Repair, and Fight. Before you begin, find a mold – literate health professional. Trying to do it on your own, you can make yourself sicker. The author had made herself and her patients sicker before she knew how to use the tools. Just as the hazmat professionals wear protective suits, you also need to use the right protective methods.

The Herxheimer reaction from the mold dying (remember that they spew out toxins when attacked?) releases poisons all over the body to cause chills, fever, aches, diarrhea, and brain effects such as overwhelming sadness and despair. Doing it properly won’t guarantee no Herx, but it reduces the probability of it, and the severity and length. A

Herx reaction longer than 3 days is too much, signaling the need to rest and to back off from treatment, and to use another set of tools in the “Fight” section. If you are improving and doing well, don’t stop any steroid immune – suppressive medication without first checking with your prescribing practitioner. Recognize also that healing doesn’t happen in a straight line, but can be messy and disorderly. Improvement can occur, then relapses, etc., and other new, less serious symptoms may show up, such as skin rashes, when the more severe ones are getting better, as if the toxins were moving from inside to the surface, before leaving altogether. It can be much like peeling one layer of the problem off, before another shows up. Do one battle at a time. If your general, overall health and stamina are improving, then stick with the plan. Do one achievable thing at a time, and then wait. Be gentle with yourself. The first step is getting out of the environment. That may help a lot, but there is much more to do after that.

This article may give some overview of how to approach the problem, but for anyone with suspected mold illness, I highly recommend getting the book and studying it. Much of the information, the questionnaires, and resources section are too lengthy to put into an article.

In part II, we survey the 5 tools for recovery, and details about buildings and remediation, and resources for help.